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ABSTRACT

This monograph describes media strategies that advocates for gifted children can use to promote gifted and talented education. It begins by discussing different types of media outlets that advocates can use to get their message across, including television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet. The tools of media work are then described. Ways to write a press release are provided, along with a sample press release. Information is also provided on writing media advisories, creating pitch letters, attending ascertainment meetings, scheduling editorial board meetings, writing letters to the editor and "op-eds," and doing radio interviews. The monograph closes by emphasizing the need to consider the right timing for advocacy efforts. A list of target groups for advocacy efforts is also provided. Appendices include a summary of media outlets, a sample press release, a sample media advisory, a sample letter to the editor, and a list of possible newsworthy events that can garner media attention for gifted education. (CR)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Selling Without $$: Grassroots Advocates of Gifted and Talented Education Meet the Media

Mary Eileen Wood, M.S.

We advocate for gifted and talented education. We teach gifted and talented youngsters in our classrooms, or we raise them in our homes. We meet with administrators and school boards concerning the children's needs and the essential programming to meet those needs. But education involves the *entire* community. Each person wears the various hats of taxpayer, neighbor, voter – and *each person needs to hear our message!* For that, we need the media.

The media – newspapers, television, radio, the Internet – exist to communicate, and we have what they need: important and accurate information, plus sincere people to share it. We must clarify our role in the process and package our information efficiently and appropriately for media use.

We Need Each Other

The media hunt constantly for newsworthy events and fascinating people, but they cannot know what goes on in our classrooms or communities unless we tell them. They WANT to hear from us teachers and parents! Don't succumb to the fear that we "brag" by sharing the good news of children exploring their possibilities. Rather, we let hope shine out of the bleak coverage of violence, politics, and personal disasters. Yet, neither do we have automatic access. The media and activists operate as partners in the communication process with the public audience. Let me introduce our "communicating partners" in a local media market, then review the vocabulary and techniques we advocates need to hold up our end of this exchange. (Summary in Appendix 1)

Our Communicating Partners

Remember that for each of these individuals, working with you is his/her job. This means you do not impose when you contact them, only when you waste their time. Make every contact efficient. Remember too, that your passion for gifted and talented issues is not necessarily shared by the person. When you make your followup calls *(you always make followup calls!)*, accept the answer "no" with a smile … and contact the person for the next event or issue!

Television – For TV coverage, think in pictures, then approach *assignments editors* for news shows, *producers* for other programming, and the *public service director* for other possibilities. These overworked people coordinate coverage, assign the crews *and* often work the field, acting as "talent" themselves. Ask them (when they are not "on deadline") about their audience and exactly what they need. Not only will you gain valuable information, but you will also foster a crucial relationship. These people need to know you and your issues.

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Radio – To get on the radio, we have two routes. Talk to a news director about news programming, remembering that they take considerable feed from their national affiliates. Generally approach them only with "pithy brief stuff," unless they offer public affairs programs as on all-news stations. For other than news programs, call the producer/host of the talk show, or the public service director.

Newspapers – Desk editors are the key to newspaper headlines. They take in information and give assignments to reporters. Advocates for gifted and talented education working with a daily paper generally concentrate on the "City Desk," "Lifestyles," or "Neighbors" for their events, but may well want to pitch an issue-oriented article or series to the Executive or Editorial Page Editor. With a small-town weekly, or the local "delivered free to every door" paper, do contact the reporter assigned your neighborhood, but still send all your announcements and background reports to the editor. Don't forget the campus papers in nearby colleges; they often cover local issues!

Remember, too, the Editorial Pages. Editorial board meetings can produce an editorial, and you can submit Letters to the Editor. You might even ask an advocacy organization's Board member to submit an "op-ed" for consideration (see "Tools" below).

Internet – Whether you use email, bulletin boards, listservs, or chat rooms, or launch your own website, an Internet link can afford you quick access to *some* people. (Note: Online communication typically limits you to middle and upper class readers. Gifted and talented children come from all economic backgrounds.) Meet with your school's or local library's computer specialist, or ask the service people at the local computer shop for help in developing your "local database" for online communication.

The Tools of Media Work

Press releases (Appendix 2) – Concentrate carefully on this detailed discussion. You make a powerful impression with a press release that can define the response to your message. Study the sample in Appendix 2 in detail after reading the guidelines here. For additional questions, see the annotated references at the end of the monograph.

The key to a good press release echoes your fifth grade teacher's lesson on "The Five Ws and the H." You must answer "Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How" -- and you must do it using active voice in concise sentences. Analyze your message and prioritize it carefully, because the editor's red pen slashes mercilessly. The most important info must come first, forming what is called an "inverted pyramid"; anything below the editor's red slash no longer exists!

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The first or "lead" paragraph generally includes some, if not all, of the 5Ws and the H. More importantly, the lead MUST catch the editor's interest. The best way may not be to cover the 5Ws/H, but rather to pull in key news issues associated with current news coverage.

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Use letterhead if you have it, or at least center and bold your organization name here!

PRESS RELEASE
Date:

CONTACT: Name of someone
available days, phone, fax, email

HEADLINE (centered, capitalized, and underlined or bold)

PLACE– This "dateline" can include a date as well, if it differs from the release date given above. The dateline is capitalized, indented, followed by no space, two dashes and then a space. Note: Clarify your 5Ws/H and very choose what you will include. By writing your lead paragraph succinctly and well, you catch the editor's attention AND save the editor/staff time and concentration. It is good to please the editor! Wait to create your headline until your lead is finished; the headline will write itself from the lead.

Note: leave wide margins so the editor can make notes, and use only standard sheets of paper, no odd sizes such as legal. Only the shredder reads those!

Let us assume the press release unfortunately requires a second page, despite your determined efforts to keep to a single page. You must therefore end the first page with "MORE," and head the second page (NOT letterhead) as below.

MORE

Date:

Organization/ page 2 of 2

Next paragraph.

Now the press release is complete. To let the editor know you are done (and to start tracing any missing pages), end with "####."

####

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The obvious next issue is where to send your masterpiece. From the sidebar on the following page, use "The media for our message" and the phonebook to develop a preliminary press list. Then contact the switchboard of each outlet for the names, addresses, phones and fax numbers of the various editors, and the exact name of each calendar option available. (To save considerable time, approach the Chamber of Commerce for permission to use their press list as your starting point. *Then make it your own with notes about the various editors and reporters as you contact them. Keep a careful record of what works and what doesn't with each individual; jot down if s/he loves the Yankees, has a child with a serious ear infection, or shares your alma mater.*) Remember your followup calls!

The media for our message

- Newspapers (daily, weekly, free to all; news, feature, editorial page)
- Television (news, feature, public access cable)
- Radio (news, talk show)
- Internet (email, bulletin board, listserv, chat room, website)

Limited access target groups

- Gifted and talented students
- Their teachers, parents, program personnel
- Regular classroom teachers
- School administrators
- Psychologists and psychometricians
- Guidance counselors, curriculum specialists
- Librarians and media consultants
- School board members
- Special education personnel
- Legislators, members of state boards of education, and other policy makers
- Business and professional leaders
- Community leaders and members
- Medical personnel
- Social psychologists
- Persons with responsibility for teacher preparation in general and special ed.
- Curriculum and textbook consultants
- Visionaries and futurists
- Theorists and researchers
- Members of Congress
- Members and leaders in religious, humanities, and art associations
- Interdisciplinary groups and organizations in academic areas
- The general public

Based on F.A. Karnes & J.D. Lewis (1997). *Public Relations: A Necessary Tool for Advocacy in Gifted Education.* ERIC Digest #E542. <www.cec.sped.org/ericec.htm>

Note: Crucial to your ongoing media work is reliability. If you say something is going to happen, it must happen just that way. If your speaker's car breaks down en route, or the weather demolishes your program for children, call every assignment editors immediately and tell them of changes or cancellations. You will be amazed what an impact that bit of common courtesy will have!

Media advisory (Appendix 3) – This simplest of tools informs the public of meetings, lectures, press conferences, children's presentation fairs, concerts, award ceremonies, workshops … whatever you develop to help people learn about gifted and talented education, and to give opportunities for gifted and talented youngsters to explore their possibilities.

Minimalism defines the media advisory. Use the basic format of the press release. Again, begin with 5Ws/H. Answer those questions, give the contact information for further questions, and you're done. Don't rely on the telephone to announce an event; misinformation will haunt you, as people stand around waiting in the wrong place or at the wrong time, wishing you directly into the deepest depths. Verify every point of information including spelling of guests' names during your followup calls!

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Essential to successful media work is shameless promotion. After you address an envelope for each editor and producer at every television and radio station listed in the Yellow Pages, and every editor and calendar in every paper (remember, dailies often have 2-6 *different* calendars during a week; direct a notice to each separately), determine the number of hours you have available, prioritize the "limited access target groups" in the sidebar given the purpose and content of your event, and get to work. Identify the newsletter editors, or office and organization secretaries who might include your notice in their communications. Remember the church and temple bulletins, market and library bulletin boards, and school and business mailrooms throughout your community.

Pitch letters – In gifted and talented education, we often participate in long-term projects with our youngsters or face ongoing frustrations on many fronts. While not the stuff of typical headlines, we must inform our communities of these positive and negative aspects of our work in the current educational and social environment. For this, a newspaper or television feature, perhaps even a series, fits the bill. To launch discussion of these possibilities, send a pitch letter, a one-page summary of the key points of your story, to hook the "powers that be." Take these hints:

1. Market to the buyer! Do your homework on the market and the format of the show/series for which you are aiming.
2. Determine what exactly will appeal to the producer. Choose your most solid hook and pitch only one at a time.
3. First make the hook; then provide background, action, and options in the rest of the letter. Make the letter personal, so it draws the producer to read it. Include a bio/resumé or in-depth information on the issues as attachments.
4. The closing paragraph is the real suggestion. It must be carefully thought out, and polished.
5. This one shouldn't surprise you: Remember your followup calls!

Ascertainment meetings -- Every radio and television station in each media market is required by the FCC to meet four times a year for an "ascertainment meeting." The host station arranges for speakers on five or six issues of particular interest within the local market to educate the editors and/or public service director on the issue. The stations *must document* how they work to educate the community on the problems and concerns of greatest importance to the local community in the following quarter. A public file must be maintained at each station (available 9-5 weekdays), so review them and see what has been covered in the past. Your organization should present at those meetings

Editorial Board meetings – We can access newspaper editors directly through educational opportunities called "Editorial Board meetings." You call the Editor-in-Chief, and offer to arrange a visit from an authority on gifted and talented education or a resource person working with advanced students, provide background information, and followup on the Q&A session with prompt responses. The editors may choose to come; they also decide which staff to invite to the office's conference room for the Board meeting. Here is a scenario:

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> The city's gifted program loses all its funding. A member of the state advocacy organization's Board of Directors attends an Editorial Board meeting to examine gifted and talented education – why it is needed, what research demonstrates concerning its impact on other students and its efficacy with the target population, what funding options exist. A question and answer opportunity after the Director speaks gives each attendee an opportunity to explore his/her angle on our issues. As followup the next business day, you email the Editor in Chief the statistics she wanted about gifted and talented program funding in comparably-sized cities in New York; you schedule a photo opportunity with the Odyssey of the Mind team at the middle school; and you call the state advocacy organization requesting monographs for the education reporter.

Letters to the Editor and "Op-Eds" (Appendix 4) – Not every word in the newspaper comes from a staffperson. We can write letters to the editor, often in response to a specific article or the lack of one, or submit "opposite the editorial page" opinion pieces called "op-eds." The latter is typically produced by an authority on the particular subject, so the public is provided with facts as well as informed of an opinion. The rule of thumb is 250 words maximum for a letter to the editor, and 500 maximum for an op-ed. Each newspaper has its own specifications for submission; just call the switchboard if the specs are not included on the editorial pages.

Radio interviews – The fear generated by an interview speaks more to the lack of oratory classes in modern schools than to the difficulty of giving an interview! Just remember that *you* are actually in charge of an interview.

Do your homework, understanding the market of the medium interviewing you. Provide the interviewer with info in advance, to improve the quality of the questions you field. Clarify the general theme of the interview with him/her; then take time to establish your objectives! One international fundraiser always prepares a "sound bite" in advance, built around what he wants to talk about. No matter what questions he is asked, he invariably uses his sound bite once during the interview, and often manages to close with it as well. It gives focus to his preparation *and* to the spin of his responses during the interview.

During the interview, be yourself. You care about gifted and talented children – let it show! You know about the realities of gifted and talented education – share your knowledge and experience! **Just avoid personal opinion.** Regardless of any prefacing remarks, all you say will be attributed to your group, whether that is a state association, your local chapter, your PTA committee, or your school.

Timing

Good timing can turn the final report of an elementary class' environment survey into front page news, while bad timing can leave your brilliant press conference with the astronaut echoing in an empty room. You need to think about deadlines and lead time.

You should carefully check the community calendars, Chamber of Commerce, etc. for competing events. Typically, you will get the best coverage of an event if you can schedule for the morning. That allows time for writing stories and editing tapes. (Of course, if the television or radio editor wants live feed, you do all you can to adjust your schedule to fit their scheduled air times.) *But find out the specific preferences of each medium as you build your press list.*

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For media advisories to calendars, you may want as much as six weeks lead time, and do follow up! For event coverage, timings differ. Weeklies need media advisories and press releases in hand a week before their deadline for your target issue; follow up 3-4 days before deadline. To dailies, TV and radio, you mail or fax for receipt 3-4 days before the event, and follow up early on the day of the event. *Keep a record of the schedule of the assignment editors for each office – and remember, weekend staffing differs!*

Now shift your thinking to event or story timing. Link your message to regional or national stories. Be where the people you want to hear your message gather. Spin your message to feature the upcoming holiday, the star of the school team's final game, or the anniversary of other memorable stories. Use *This Day in History* (Bureau Of Electronics Publishing, 1995) to trigger some ideas.

In Closing

This monograph offers only a brief survey of media work by grass roots advocates. Do investigate the resources listed below. Also develop relationships within your own media market. As you work events, talk with the people you meet from the various media. Explore their attitudes, ask for suggestions about viable pitches or upcoming opportunities to get your word out. They know the local media market better than you, just as you better know gifted and talented education from your experiences and/or training. Forthright requests for help are a *good* idea; careful notetaking honors their expertise.

Now, as you take your first steps with the media, remember these key points:

> The media need you as much as you need them.

> You have the gift of commitment – use it!

> People are people.
> In media work, you just talk with the neighbors
> while leaning over a different fence.

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Resources

L. Bowersox, *Report from Media Workshop 10/18/87*. Syracuse, NY: Amnesty International Central New York, via University of Colorado archives.

Communications Office, University of California at Irvine (1994). *UCI Style Manual: A Guide for Writing for the Press*. <http://www.uci.edu/~inform/style/style1.html>

This guide, originally developed to promote consistency in copy prepared by the office, is available free online.

Corporation for National Service (1997). *A Guide to Working with the Media.* DC: Office of Public Affairs.

Everyone should have this outstanding "how-to" booklet for individuals and groups at any stage of media work, from developing your plan to writing press releases. Excellent suggestions for interviews! Available free from CNS, 1201 New York Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20525. Order immediately – you may still be able to request multiple copies!!

Department of Journalism and Public Communications, University of Alaska at Anchorage (9/25/98 update). *Tools and Tips for Copy Editors*. <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/jpc/copy.html>

From where to verify statistics and locate people to what phrases to avoid in your writing, this is the place to stop.

ERIC Homepage. <http://ericec.org>

The ERIC database is indispensable when writing or preparing for workshops and interviews. It features "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQs), digests, fact sheets, minibibliographies, listservs, links to other resources. Free, fast, and accurate!

N. Goldstein (Ed.) (1998). *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*. NY: Perseus.

This most widely-used authority for media work is the one to choose for your shelf.

F.A. Karnes & J.D. Lewis (1997). *Public Relations: A Necessary Tool for Advocacy in Gifted Education.* ERIC Digest #E542.

One in a series of "Karnes' real world tools."

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Medium	What?	Who?	Where?	When?	Why?	How?
Television	News show	Assignment Editor	Usually in the field, with you	Min 3 hours before show time to edit, unless live feed	To cover specific events	Media advisory / press release and followup calls
	Feature	Producer	At studio or in the field	Scheduled by producer	To cover issues or events	Pitch letter and followup calls
	Cable calendar	Cable offices	n/a	Send notice 4-6 weeks before event	To increase attendance at event	Media advisory
	Local access show for cable	Local programming producer	At studio or in the field	Usually needs long lead time	To educate community	Pitch letter and followup calls
	Ascertainment meetings	Revolving hosts	Revolving hosts (radio also)	Quarterly (files open every business day)	To cover local news priorities	Call any station
Radio	News show	News director	Usually in the field, with you	Min 3 hours before show time to edit, unless live feed	To cover specific events	Media advisory / press release and followup calls
	Talk show	Talk show producer	At studio	Scheduled by producer	To cover issues or events	Pitch letter and followup calls
Newspaper	Event coverage	City desk editor	At event, or by phone in advance	3-4 days before, plus day of event	To get coverage of event	Media advisory / press release and followup calls
	Notice of events	Calendar desk(s)	n/a	4-6 weeks in advance	To increase attendance at event	Media advisory
	Feature articles	Life editor / education reporter	Interview by phone or in person	Scheduled by editor or reporter	To educate community re issues in gifted & talented ed	Press release / pitch letter and followup calls
	Editorial board meeting	Editor in chief	At offices	At paper's convenience	To educate editors and staff on issues	Pitch letter and followup calls
	Letter to the Editor / Op-Ed	Editorial Page Editor	At offices	Often long lead time	To educate community re issues in G&T ed	Letter to the Editor / Op-Ed piece
Internet	Event coverage, notice of events, and coverage of issues in gifted and talented ed		Emails, bulletin boards, listservs, or chat rooms	As soon as possible	To report on events, increase attendance at event, and/or educate the public	Email media advisory or press release from any link, including library/office/ school/Kinko's

Appendix 1. Summary of Our Partners in the Media

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Appendix 2. Press Release – sample

Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education in New York State, Inc.

PRESS RELEASE
March 25, 20XX

Contact: Mary Eileen Wood
315/468-1025 <mewood@ibm.net>

AGATE SPONSORS EVENT FOR PARENTS AND MENTORS

Syracuse-- Want a local "Good News" story to encourage parents and teachers? AGATE, New York's advocacy organization for gifted and talented education, sponsors the "Adult Event" at the MOST Science Fair on April 11 from 1:15 to 3:00. Parents, teachers, homeschoolers, and professionals interested in mentoring will find info and great networking opportunities.

Try Wegmans' "make-some-great-messes" table demonstrating household science and math. Liverpool science teacher Jeff Peneston will share the phenomenal success of their Science Fair program. Slides and delights from Principal Michael Colabufo of Lakeland Elementary will fit well with the International Science and Engineering Fair video.

AGATE representatives will offer its Parent and Student Connections, its mentor service linking young people to professionals in their fields of interest, and the educators' professional resources of this organization on gifted and talented education. Other "enticements" include free gifts from Scientific American, discounts for Primordial's Zoob kits and Lego/Dacta, a Borders book fair, and complimentary refreshments.

AGATE can quickly arrange a pre-Fair demonstration for you!

AGATE is NY's nonprofit organization of parents and teachers promoting the education and welfare of the gifted and talented youngsters. Our nationally-distributed quarterly Gems of AGATE, *our annual state conference and our web site at* www.agateny.org *are only some of how we benefit youngsters of high potential with their unique needs.*

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Appendix 3. Media Advisory – sample

Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education in New York State, Inc.

MEDIA ADVISORY
March 25, 20XX

Contact: Mary Eileen Wood
315/468-1025 <mewood@ibm.net>

AGATE SPONSORS EVENT FOR PARENTS AND MENTORS

Syracuse-- AGATE, New York's advocacy organization for gifted and talented education, will sponsor its first Science Fair "Adult Event" at the Junior Division of the MOST Science Fair on April 11. Parents, teachers, homeschoolers, professional people interested in becoming mentors … ALL are welcome to this free reception and resources fair!

AGATE's great Sunday afternoon includes:

- the Wegmans "make-some-great-messes" household science table;
- the Borders Books and Music book fair;
- free gifts from Scientific American;
- discounts on orders from Primordial's *Zoob*, Lego Dacta, and Commercial Art Supply;
- presentations on the International Science and Engineering Fair, how local schools and parents encourage authentic research, and what services AGATE offers;
- even *free* refreshments!

AGATE Adult Event

at the MOST Junior Division Science Fair

Sunday, April 11

1:15 – 3:00 p.m.

OCC's Storer Auditorium

Free to the public!

Science, math and engineering – where kids have a blast
while preparing for their futures! Open the door for YOUR child!

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Appendix 4. Letter to the Editor -- sample

(Note: Contact AGATE's Board of Directors to request an "op-ed" piece on gifted and talented education.)

This letter to the editor, originally provided to members of AGATE in the Fall 1998 issue of its quarterly *Gems of AGATE*, urges school systems to follow NY state regulations and notify parents and superintendents of those children identified as "gifted or possibly gifted" during the kindergarten screening procedures.

Date

Dear Editor,

By now, parents of entering kindergarten children should be hearing from the schools if the required kindergarten screening shows that their child may potentially be gifted.

While New York State regulations **require** that parents and superintendents be notified, there is no similar regulation that these children be provided any of the services essential to the wellbeing and successful development of children with high potential. So what should parents do when they receive their notification?

First, be delighted! You received *good news*! Then speak with your child's classroom teacher. S/he will help you identify what IS available in your school system to meet your child's unique needs. If the two of you cannot locate appropriate services, s/he can suggest who is next in line for your questions.

As you work with your school system, I suggest you also contact Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education in New York State Inc. (AGATE). An independent nonprofit organization, AGATE connects parents, teachers, administrators and other service professionals across our state. From people to talk with by phone to local chapters, from monographs with information parents need to our nationally-distributed quarterly magazine, AGATE can help you as you help your child continue to grow as a happy and well-adjusted individual. Parents and teachers will gather in Saratoga Falls in November, 1998, for a statewide conference as well.

If your school system does not screen for giftedness and talent, AGATE produces includes a simple ready-to-use screening instrument based on a parent-completed form.

Sincerely,

[your signature, address and phone. You may ask the paper to print AGATE's address, etc., not your home info. AGATE, PO Box 289, Solvay NY 13209. 315/468-0709 (phone/fax) <mewood@ibm.net>]

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Appendix 5. Newsworthy Events

Newsworthy events need not be extravagant; they need only hold the attention of the assignment editor and his/her medium's market. The following list is provided as a brainstorming starter for your group. No group yet? Many of these projects have been done by an individual seeking to *start* community groups. The event gives you a venue to demonstrate the need for talented and gifted programming, and access to the media to explain that need and how the entire community gains by providing for all the children.

1. **Book event** – Working with a local bookstore, host a "book event" that features titles of particular interest to gifted and talented youngsters. You bear no expense (you might even earn some money for your group!), you polish an image of serving the community, and you give the media a new angle to cover holiday gifts, which helps them sell advertising! (Search the Internet for book lists.)
2. **Celebrity visit** – If an artist, astronaut, or Member of Congress comes to give a lecture or performance, or to facilitate a workshop, even one for adults, bring along your gifted and talented youngsters. The *second* time you do this (a trial run is always recommended to guarantee your group *can* handle field trips such as adult lectures), let the media know in advance; they will be charmed!
3. **Concert** – If advanced instrumental and vocal students in an area with no performance opportunities offer a concert series at the local nursing home, the media will come!
4. **Courses** – Many communities in NY offer night classes for the general public. Offer a course on gifted and talented education (contact your state advocacy organization for suggestions), and invite the media to the classes when you have a guest presenter! Or when your school provides special afternoon opportunities for students to take different courses, invite the media to a performance or ask the students to write letters to the editor about what they are learning and who in the community came to help them.
5. **"Gathering"** – When you have a petition drive urging funding of a Challenge Program for gifted and talented youngsters, collect completed petitions at a specific time at a central location such as a park or the front steps of the building in which the School Board will meet tomorrow, where a leafless tree sprouts paper "leaves" representing each signature. You create an eye-catching display, and share your enthusiasm for the Challenge Program with those who visit.
6. **Group meeting** – Invite a Board member from your state advocacy organization to address your PTA, staff workshop, or chapter meeting, and build an editorial board meeting or radio talk show into the visit!
7. **Links to state or national coverage** – If you can identify and develop a "local angle" for education legislation at the state or federal level, call the media immediately! Or when the National Association for Gifted Children releases its annual endorsement list for holiday gifts, host a "gift party" at the mall inviting all the shops that carry those toys. They pitch their "good toys" and you pitch "meeting the needs of gifted and talented children."
8. **Local gifted and talented conference / PACT** – Parents and Children Together (PACT) is a day of activities for children with their parents, and for children while parents attend workshops on gifted and talented education, or the needs of the gifted. Contact AGATE for more information.

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9. **Piggyback event** – When a group of children who meet independently to study astronomy gather at the county park to watch a meteor shower, invite the press and discuss inquiring minds and how the community might serve them!
10. **Science fair** – Have a representative from the nearest science fair committee visit your PTA and bring several youngsters who presented at the previous year's fair. You will encourage your school to participate *and* create a media event.
11. **Service project** – When students build bluebird houses for a trail at the county park, invite the media to see the houses mounted on the trees and fences.
12. **Thank you notes** – When your youngsters attend an atypical event such as an adult lecture at the hospital by a cancer researcher, have them make a thank you poster in advance (think big and colorful – 15' rollout of newsprint works very well!) to give to the presenter. Take a picture of the presentation and send prints to the local papers for their neighborhood coverage (or whatever route they take to use photos from non-staff photographers). Typically the weeklies and "free to every door" papers use such shots, and voilà, you have coverage!
13. **"Treats"** – Say the local PBS affiliate hosts a NASA teleconference at the studio, and advanced students from your school attend. Invite the media to come as well. (This one got television coverage on the commercial network's news when we did it!)

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